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ABSTRACT

These two booklets, one for parents and the other for human service professionals, were designed by the Delaware Valley Child Care Council to provide information about local day care services to low and moderate income families, families with income at or below the poverty level, and families who either receive or have received public assistance within the past year. The parent booklet provides the addresses and telephone numbers of area county assistance offices, local management agencies, and Head Start programs, as well as the maximum income levels for assistance under these programs. The human service professional's booklet includes similar information, but is more specific in discussing how parents can qualify for these child care assistance programs. It also outlines specific steps that can be taken to help parents find funding, and provides examples of applicable child care benefits and guidelines on helping parents select a good early childhood program. (MDM)

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Finding the Funds

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A Parent's Guide to Child Care Dollars

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Dear Parent,

Finding child care so you can go to work, or stay at work, or attend a job training or education program can be hard.

This guide has been prepared to help you. The information is for low and moderate income families, families with income at or below the poverty level, and families who either receive or have received public assistance within the last year.

If your income is too high, or there are not enough government funds, there may be other options for you and your family.

You can:

- Ask the child care facility of your choice if there are private scholarships available. There are not many, but you may find some.
- Ask your employer if child care benefits are available. Some employers help to pay for child care.

If you have any questions about finding child care funds, please call or write to us at the address or telephone number below. Your comments and feedback are important.

Sincerely,

Letty D. Thall — Susan A. Conrad

Letty D. Thall
Executive Director

Susan A. Conrad
Project Director

Delaware Valley Child Care Council
401 North Broad Street, Suite 818
Philadelphia, PA 19108

(215) 922-7526
(215) 922-2722 FAX

Do you wonder...

How can I pay for child care?

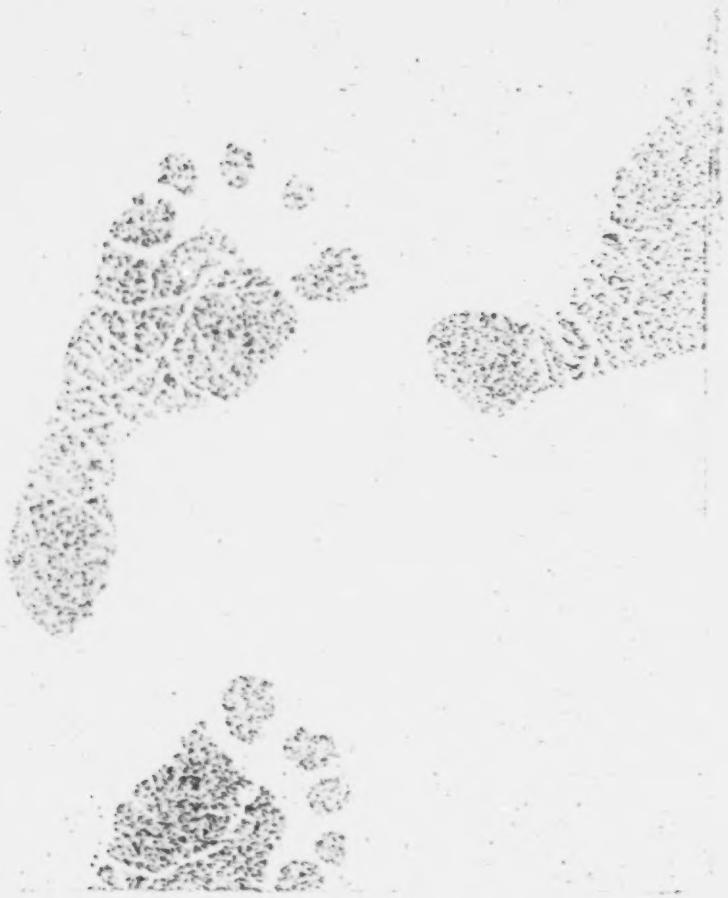
These pages will help you find the telephone number and location where you can apply for government child care assistance.

Remember...

There are not enough government funds to serve all parents.

There may be waiting lists for funding.

If you are confused about how to find funds for child care, follow these steps...



Step 1

Look at the following guidelines to help you decide if you may be eligible for child care funding, and which government agency to call.

Step 2

If you live in Philadelphia, call CHOICE for information about child care at 985-3302, or locate the County Assistance Office, Local Management Agency, or Head Start office closest to where you live for the telephone number to call.

Note: Child care assistance is available to children from birth to their 13th birthday.

County Assistance Office

You are a parent who is a food stamp recipient or is receiving a cash grant, or have received a cash grant within the last year. You should ask for an Employment and Training Counselor or the County Assistance Office's New Directions Program.

County Assistance Office

Area	Address	Phone
Alden	5853 Germantown Ave.	560-4800
Boulevard	4109 Frankford Ave.	560-6500
Center	900 North Marshall St.	560-3600
Delancey	5548 Chestnut St., 1st Fl.	560-3700
Elmwood	5554 Chestnut St., 2nd Fl.	560-3800
Federal	1415 Catherine St.	560-4400
Girard	961 North Marshall St.	560-3500
Hill	5538-C Wayne Ave.	560-5200
Jefferson	638 N. 13th St., 1st Fl.	560-6600
Kent	638 N. 13th St., 2nd Fl.	560-5400
Lehigh	2300 W. Allegheny Ave.	560-4609
North	219 East Lehigh Ave.	560-4000
Ogontz	5538 Wayne Ave.	560-5000
Ridge	1350 West Sedgley Ave.	560-4900
Snyder	1334 Bainbridge St.	560-4300
Tioga	1348 West Sedgley Ave.	560-4700
Unity	4111 Frankford Ave.	560-6400
Vine	1400 Spring Garden St.	560-2301
West	5000 Parkside Ave.	560-6100

Local Management Agency

You are a working family or in job training (at least 20 hours a week), and your family size and total annual income is no more than:

Family Size	Income
1	$ 16,004
2	$ 21,597
3	$ 27,190
4	$ 32,783
5	$ 38,376
6	$ 43,969

Local Management Agency

Area	Phone
South Philadelphia/Center City	271-0433
West Philadelphia	382-4762
Northeast Philadelphia	333-1560
Northwest Philadelphia	842-4820
North Philadelphia	228-5502

Delaware Valley Child Care Council
401 North Broad Street, Suite 818
Philadelphia, PA 19108

(215) 922-7526
(215) 922-2722 FAX

Head Start Program

You need care for your 3 and/or 4 year old and your total annual family income is no more than:

Family Size	Income
1	$ 6,810
2	$ 9,190
3	$ 11,570
4	$ 13,950
5	$ 16,330
6	$ 18,710

Head Start Program

Address	Phone
Rainbow Community Head Start Program 1102 Rising Sun Avenue	225-5600
Pre-K, Head Start, Philadelphia School District Stevens Administration Center, Room 301 13th and Spring Garden Streets	351-7060
Little Neighborhood Centers, Inc. 1609-13 West Poplar Street	236-8008
Philadelphia Parent Child Center, Inc. 2515 Germantown Avenue	229-1800
Early Childhood Programs Philadelphia Housing Authority 801 Arch Street, 5th Floor	684-4300
Manna/RHDI Head Start 6440 Greene Street	843-4580
Head Start Learning Tree 846 South 57th Street	748-2422

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Acknowledgements

This guide has been developed by the Delaware Valley Child Care Council with special thanks and appreciation to the many state, federal and local government officials and staff, parents, and other dedicated persons in the child care community who graciously reviewed this guide and added their special perspectives to the endeavor.

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DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONAL'S HANDBOOK for CHILD CARE DOLLARS

Finding the Funds

PS 021804

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About DVCCC

The Delaware Valley Child Care Council (DVCCC) was formed in 1985 as the result of a United Way Agency study that indicated the need for a regional coordinated organization to provide a problem solving forum for day care issues in the region.

The Child Care Council exists to promote the development of a regional child day care delivery system which assures accessible, affordable, quality child care services for all children and families who seek such services. Council objectives are:

- To identify and eliminate regulatory, legal, financial, geographic or cultural barriers to accessible, quality child day care.
- To promote cooperation among concerned constituencies and minimize duplication of effort.
- To enhance child day care advocacy efforts.

The Child Care Council is a non-profit organization composed of child care professionals, parents, unions, businesses, government and community leaders, all of whom have a stake in the child care delivery system.

How you can participate:

Collaboration is an essential component of our work. Your contribution to our efforts will be welcomed in many ways. For membership information or to join a committee, write to:

Delaware Valley Child Care Council
401 North Broad Street, Suite 818
Philadelphia, PA 19108

Or call (215) 922-7526

Publication of this Handbook is possible because of grants from The McLean Contributionship and The Partnership Group, Inc.

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May, 1993

Dear Colleague,

The Delaware Valley Child Care Council, with the assistance of state and federal agencies, has designed this booklet for you, the human service professional, to assist low and moderate income parents find child care. This handbook is a companion to the brochure, "Finding the Funds - A Parent's Guide for Child Care Dollars".

There are more than 1,000 licensed child day care centers, about 2,500 regulated family day care homes, and 11 Head Start contractors in the five county region for parents to choose. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania policy is to allow parents to choose a child care facility, with funding ideally following the child. Then, parents can apply for financial assistance to any of the 18 County Assistance Offices, 9 Local Management Agencies, and over 80 Head Start sites.

It can be confusing to know where to begin and which telephone number to call to meet child care financing needs. The "Parent's Guide for Child Care Dollars" and this handbook were prepared to provide basic child care funding information to determine the appropriate government agency to call for further information. We hope this handbook will:

- assist you to track the different streams and agencies,
- help improve coordination and communication among the agencies and programs serving children in our community,
- help all of us help parents receive the funds.

Finding opportunities for child care should not be complex. The Child Care Council is distributing this information as part of a project to monitor public funds for child care. The first phase is to explain to the community how to find funds. The "Parent's Guide" and this handbook are part of this phase. The next phase is to learn how parents are receiving funds. We need your help to do so. Please let us know about your experiences and suggestions. You may call me at (215) 922-7526.

Our thanks to the many state, federal and local government officials, the parents, and child care and other human service professionals who graciously reviewed this guide and added their unique perspectives to the endeavor. Our special appreciation to Nancy Norcross, Child Care Coordinator, Department of Public Welfare; Adele Epstein, Local Management Agency Coordinator, Department of Public Welfare; Fred Bostwick, Community Services Director, Department of Public Welfare; Susan Clarke, Income Maintenance Case Work Supervisor, Department of Public Welfare; Gail Lipton, Federal Projects Supervisor, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services; and Connie Whitson, Executive Director, Montgomery County Office of Child Day Care Services. The development and synthesis of all this information is the result of Susan A. Conrad's capable analytical thought.

Funding for this project was provided by Samuel S. Fels Fund, The William Penn Foundation, and The Pew Charitable Trust. Publication of this handbook was made possible by the generous contributions of The McLean Contributionship and The Partnership Group, Inc.

Letty D. Thall
Executive Director

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE PARENTS WITH CHILD CARE FUNDS

Public funding for child care is available to children from birth until their 13th birthday. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has implemented a policy of parent choice of child care facility. The parent should choose the facility, and the funding should follow the child. The three agencies for child care funding are:

- **COUNTY ASSISTANCE OFFICE,** if parents are
  - receiving food stamps, or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC);
  - in need of job training or education to become employable;
  - in need of transitional child care assistance because AFDC ended within the past year as a result of employment

- **LOCAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY,** if parents are
  - Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) employed;
  - in the position where transitional child care assistance has expired;
  - receiving a low or moderate income from employment;
  - in job training and not on AFDC

- **HEAD START PROGRAM,** if parents are
  - in a family with income at or below poverty level and in need of care for children aged 3 - 4 years old

COUNTY ASSISTANCE OFFICE (CAO)

Provides help for families currently receiving public assistance, or who received public assistance during the past year.

Parents applying for a child care subsidy must ask to speak with a "New Directions" program worker. This worker determines eligibility for subsidy and refers eligible parents to child care. The New Directions program worker may refer a parent to the JOBS program if training or education is needed to become self-sufficient through employment, or to Transitional Child Care if AFDC has been terminated as a result of employment.

The CAO Office will:

- determine eligibility
- distribute uncapped, entitlement funds
- refer a parent to a New Directions Program worker for job training, education or Transitional Child Care (TCC) assistance -- if AFDC has been terminated as a result of employment
- assure parent choice in the selection of a child care facility/provider
- distribute vendor payments directly to the provider, or provide payment directly to the parent
- coordinate services with the Local Management Agency

County Assistance Office Definition of family:

Federal regulations are too complex to list here. A family is defined differently for AFDC than for food stamps. The CAO must make the official determination, but generally, a family consists of all minor children and the caretaker/relative(s) who occupy a common dwelling. One exception is a child who is receiving AFDC Public Assistance benefits and is living with a grandparent who does not receive assistance, and who is living with the grandparent because the child's natural parent is alcohol- or drug-dependent, is considered a separate family of one.

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

LOCAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY (LMA)

Provides help for AFDC employed parents, low- and moderate-income employed parents, and parents in job training not on AFDC.

Parents can apply for child care subsidy at their LMA. When applying to a Local Management Agency for subsidized child care, funds are administered on a priority basis, according to the definitions listed below. Thus, one parent could get a subsidy while another in the same neighborhood is put on a waiting list. In Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties, the Local Management Agencies are part of the county government. In Bucks and Philadelphia counties, private agencies received contracts to deliver these services.

The LMA Office will:

- determine eligibility for capped, non-entitlement funds (eligibility does not guarantee immediate funding and family may be put on a waiting list)
- determine service priorities (neediest families have first priority) based on the following criteria:

  Priority 1 - an AFDC employed caretaker or eligibility for TCC has expired with income below 235% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
  Priority 2 - an employed caretaker with income at or below 185% FPL
  Priority 3 - an employed caretaker with income between 186% and 235% FPL
  Priority 4 - a caretaker in job training and not eligible to receive a child care allowance from AFDC

- provide Information and Referral services about child care providers to families who meet eligibility requirements
- manage any waiting lists
- assure parent choice in the selection of a child care facility/provider
- coordinate services with the County Assistance Office

Local Management Agency Definition of family[1]:

1. The caretaker, the caretaker's spouse or live-in companion, and unemancipated minor child(ren) who occupy a common residence
2. An individual who is under 18 years of age and is the caretaker for her/his own minor child is considered a separate family, even if she/he is unemancipated and continues to reside with and be financially dependent on her/his parent
3. A foster child is a separate family of one
4. A child who is receiving AFDC Public Assistance benefits and is living with a grandparent who does not receive assistance, and who is living with the grandparent because the child's natural parent is alcohol- or drug-dependent, is considered a separate family of one.

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[1] This definition reprinted with permission of the Montgomery County Office of Child Day Care Services, the Local Management Agency for Subsidized Child Day Care, Norristown, PA

HEAD START

A federally funded program usually serving 3 or 4 year old children, for families at or below the poverty level. Funds go to the Head Start programs and are capped. There are no parent fees.

Parents can apply for child care at their Head Start site.

The Head Start Agency will:

- determine eligibility
- enroll children
- provide comprehensive developmental services
- require parent participation in the program
- not require parents to be employed or in training
- operate for part of the day, and do not necessarily coincide with the work day

Head Start Definition of family[2]:

The term "family" means all persons living in the same household who are

(i) Supported by the income of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child enrolling or participating in a Head Start program, and
(ii) Related to the parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption.

The term "low-income family" means a family whose total annual income before taxes is equal to, or less than, the income guidelines (the official poverty line). The term also includes a family that is receiving public assistance even if family income exceeds the income guidelines.

[2] Title 45 - Public Welfare, Chapter XIII, Part 1305.

THE STEPS TO HELP PARENTS FIND FUNDING

First Step:

Review the eligibility guide on page 6 with parent to determine which of three agencies to contact:

County Assistance Office (CAO)
Local Management Agency (LMA)
Head Start Program (HSP)

Second Step:

Locate the appropriate agency closest to parent's residence listed on pages 7 through 9, and provide the telephone number to the parents.

Third Step:

Provide parent with a copy of the "Parent Guide to Child Care Dollars" and/or follow up with parent to determine if further assistance is needed. Extra copies can be obtained by calling the Child Care Council at (215) 922-7526.

Fourth Step:

Communicate your experience with others. Public officials need to hear about problems and successes with this funding system. One of the roles of the Child Care Council is to assist in ensuring that the system is working as designed.

If all does not go as planned for the parent or parents who are your clients, or if there are examples of successes that should be shared, the following people want to know and are willing to assist:

<u>New Directions</u>
If your Public Assistance client(s) have problems, call the Employment and Training or New Directions supervisor at your local County Assistance office.

<u>Local Management Agencies</u>
The State Department of Public Welfare officials responsible for all Local Management Agencies are Adele Epstein and Carolyn Laumer, Local Management Agency Coordinators. Their phone number is (215) 560-2541.

<u>Head Start</u>
The first step to resolving Head Start questions is contacting the Executive Director of each Head Start contracted agency. Since the federal government contracts directly with Head Start providers, the second step is to contact Region III of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services--specifically, Gail Lipton, Federal Projects Supervisor, at (215) 596-0388.

You may also call Susan Lundy or Letty Thall at the Delaware Valley Child Care Council at (215) 922-7526. We want to know if any official explanations do not make sense to you or if problems are not resolved, and we want to share the successes for all to celebrate.

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

ELIGIBILITY GUIDES

LOCAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY

A parent is in a working family or in job training (at least 20 hours a week), and total annual income is no more than:

Family Size	Income
1	$16,003
2	$21,596
3	$27,189
4	$32,782
5	$38,375
6	$43,968

HEAD START

A parent needs care for a 3 or 4 year old, and total annual family income is no more than:

Family Size	Income
1	$ 6,970
2	$ 9,430
3	$11,890
4	$14,350
5	$16,810
6	$19,270

COUNTY ASSISTANCE OFFICE

for

Philadelphia & Delaware counties

If a parent is receiving public assistance, the minimum cash grants are:

Family Size	Cash Grant *
1	$2,460
2	$3,792
3	$4,836
4	$5,964
5	$7,068
6	$8,040

COUNTY ASSISTANCE OFFICE

for

Montgomery, Bucks & Chester counties

If a parent is receiving public assistance, the minimum cash grants are:

Family Size	Cash Grant *
1	$2,580
2	$3,960
3	$5,052
4	$6,168
5	$7,284
6	$8,244

* This is a cash grant chart for your information. These grant and income levels are subject to change. For all low income families, please follow through with the County Assistance Office. A parent who is already a food stamp recipient, or is receiving AFDC, or has received AFDC within the last year may be eligible for child care funds.

NOTE: The above are the current rates for 1992-93 and are changed annually.

Now that you have decided which agency to contact, turn to the following pages to find the telephone number of the agency closest to the client's home.

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

AGENCIES & TELEPHONE NUMBERS

If a parent lives in Philadelphia County, CHOICE may be called for information about child care at 985-3302, or parents may look at the following directory for the phone number of the County Assistance office, Local Management Agency or Head Start office closest to where she/he lives.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY

County Assistance District offices

Alden	5853 Germantown Avenue	560-4800
Boulevard	4109 Frankford Avenue	560-6500
Center	900 North Marshall Street	560-3600
Delancey	548 Chestnut Street, 1st Floor	560-3700
Elmwood	5554 Chestnut Street, 2nd Floor	560-3800
Federal	1415 Catherine Street	560-4400
Girard	961 North Marshall Street	560-3500
Hill	301 East Chelten Avenue, 3rd Floor	560-5200
Jefferson	638 North 13th Street, 1st Floor	560-6600
Kent	638 North 13th Street, 2nd Floor	560-5400
Lehigh	2300 West Allegheny Avenue	560-4609
North	219 West Lehigh Avenue	560-4000
Ogontz	5538 Wayne Avenue	560-5000
Ridge	1350 West Sedgley Avenue	560-4900
Snyder	1334 Bainbridge Street	560-4300
Tioga	1348 West Sedgley Avenue	560-4700
Unity	4111 Frankford Avenue	560-6400
Vine	1400 Spring Garden Street	560-2301
West	5000 Parkside Avenue	560-6100

Local Management Agencies

South Philadelphia and Center City	271-0433
West Philadelphia	382-4762
Northeast Philadelphia	333-1560
Northwest Philadelphia	842-4820
North Philadelphia	228-5502

PHILADELPHIA (continued)

Head Start Programs:

There is no centralized intake for Head Start. Each contractor has its own intake and several contractors have many sites. The Philadelphia School District is the largest contractor, with over 60 sites.

Rainbow Community Head Start Program
1102 Rising Sun Avenue 225-5600
Pre-K, Head Start, Philadelphia School District
Stevens Administration Center, Room 301,
13th and Spring Garden Streets 351-7060
Little Neighborhood Centers, Inc.,
1609-13 West Poplar Street 236-8008
Philadelphia Parent Child Center, Inc.,
2515 Germantown Avenue 299-1800
Early Childhood Programs, Phila. Housing Authority
801 Arch Street, 5th Floor 684-4300
Manna/RHDI Head Start, 6440 Greene Street 843-4580
Head Start Learning Tree, 846 South 57th Street 748-2422

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

County Assistance Offices

Norristown - 1950 Calamia Drive 270-3509
Pottstown - 19 North Charlotte Street 327-5630

Local Management Agency . . . . . 278-3707 or 1-800-281-1116

Head Start Programs 887-0916

DELAWARE COUNTY

County Assistance Offices

Chester - 7th and Yarnall Streets 497-7810
Chester - 531 Penn Street 447-3015
Lansdowne - 77 Union Avenue 284-6900

Local Management Agency . . . . . 891-8647 or 1-800-831-3117

Head Start Programs 872-2034

BUCKS COUNTY

County Assistance Offices

Bristol - 1200 New Rodgers Road 785-6700
Warminster - 1386 West Street Road 1-800-362-1291

Local Management Agency . . . . . 348-1283 or 1-800-371-2109

Head Start Programs 943-1140

CHESTER COUNTY

County Assistance Offices

West Chester - 510 Gay Street 436-2020
Coatesville - 101 East Lincoln Highway 383-5300

Local Management Agency . . . . . 344-5717 or 1-800-870-2323

Head Start Programs 383-3811

EXAMPLES OF APPLICABLE CHILD DAY CARE BENEFITS[3]

Situation	Result
1. Ms. Jones and her three children receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits from the County Assistance Office (CAO). Ms. Jones is not working or enrolled in a training program and has no other income.	1. Ms. Jones is not eligible for child care benefits from the CAO or LMA. If she has a three or four-year old, she should investigate Head Start.
2. Through the CAO, Ms. Jones is enrolled in a General Educational Development (GED) program.	2. If Ms. Jones' training plan has been approved by the CAO, she is eligible for Title IV-A child care benefits from the CAO. If Ms. Jones' training program is not approved by the CAO, she could apply for benefits from the LMA. If Ms. Jones is eligible, she would be a priority #4.
3. Once Ms. Jones successfully completes the GED program, she is enrolled in a two-year Community College course to become a computer programmer.	3. If Ms. Jones' training plan is approved by the CAO, Ms. Jones is eligible for Title IV-A child care benefits from the CAO. If Ms. Jones' training program is not approved by the CAO, she could apply for benefits from the LMA. If Ms. Jones is eligible she would be a priority #4.
4. Ms. Jones successfully completes the computer programmer program and is hired by XYZ Hospital and remains eligible for a reduced amount of AFDC benefits. Ms. Jones is now an employed AFDC client.	4. Ms. Jones is eligible for child day care benefits from the LMA as a priority #1.

[3] Reprinted with the permission of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Harrisburg, PA

Situation	Result
5. Ms. Jones continues to be employed by XYZ Hospital. Ms. Jones is ineligible to receive AFDC benefits due to excess earned income. Ms. Jones' income is less than 185 percent of FPIG limit.	5. Ms. Jones is eligible for Transitional Child Care (TCC) benefits from the CAO for 12 months beginning with the date her AFDC benefits are closed. (Ms. Jones may apply for retroactive benefits if she is late in requesting TCC.)
6. Ms. Jones' 12 months of TCC eligibility expires and she remains employed.	6. Ms. Jones is eligible for child day care benefits from the LMA as a priority #1.

GOVERNMENT SOURCES OF CHILD CARE FUNDS

The major funding streams for child care for children from birth to 13 years old are:

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare
Office of Income Maintenance
(working through the County Assistance Office)

The federal food stamp program and AFDC Program, Title IV-A, provides child care entitlement benefits and child care special allowances to AFDC recipients in an education or job training program (JOBS). The Family Support Act of 1988 also provides child care benefits to prior AFDC recipients who are in the IV-A Transitional Child Care (TCC) program whose AFDC was terminated as a result of employment.

- The program is an entitlement with uncapped funding (Title IV-A dollars must be used first)
- It includes Family Support Act of 1988 which created the federal JOBS and TCC programs operated as New Directions/SPOC in the Commonwealth
- The program assures parent choice of provider
- The Office of Income Maintenance manages the program distributing funds to providers through vendor payments for individual clients or makes payment directly to the parent (The vendor payment is not available to food stamp participants)
- TCC parents pay a family fee based on a sliding scale.

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare,
Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)
(working through the Local Management Agency)

Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant and "At Risk" funds from the 1990 Amendment to The Family Support Act comprise "New Child Care Dollars". The federal Social Services Block Grant and Commonwealth revenue are the "Old Child Care Dollars" which were known as the Title XX program.

- County governments or private agencies administer this non-entitlement, capped funding.
- Priorities are given to four categories of lowest income families. (These dollars cannot be used if Title IV-A eligible.)
- Parents select the day care center they want their child(ren) to attend.
- The OCYF contracts with the LMA agencies which issue service authorization certificates to parents and make payments to providers.
- All parents pay a family fee based on a sliding scale.

Head Start

Federal Program administered and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children, Youth and Families; Office of Human Development Services.

- Program funding is capped
- The federal government contracts directly with private or public agencies to operate Head Start programs
- There is no parent fee

DELAWARE VALLEY CHILD CARE COUNCIL

"HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM"

Parents,

Choosing a day care program can be a challenge. When selecting a program, visit at a time of day when the children should be active, such as in the morning. Take your child along, and don't hesitate to ask questions. Take this checklist as a guide. Don't expect to find everything listed here! Do choose the program with which you feel most comfortable. If you live in Philadelphia County, CHOICE may be called for information about child care at 985-3302, or you may contact the County Assistance Office, Local Management Agency or Head Start office closest to where you live.

LOOK FOR:

A. **Staff**

____ Treats children with respect, flexibility and patience.
____ Is able to meet your child's developmental and emotional needs.
____ Is of a sufficient number to meet the needs of children.
____ Takes time to discuss your child with you.
____ Practices good personal hygiene.
____ Has previous experience or training in working with children.

B. **Facility**

____ Safe indoor and outdoor areas and equipment.
____ Orderly, clean play areas.
____ Airy rooms with bright colors.
____ Sanitary bathrooms and diaper changing areas.

C. **Health and Safety**

____ Comfortable temperatures summer and winter.
____ Rounded table corners and other furniture safety features.
____ Non-toxic play materials.
____ First aid kit.
____ Health snacks and/or meals.
____ Clean kitchen area.
____ Handwashing after toileting and before meals and snacks.
____ Separate cribs for infants and separate cots/mats for others.
____ Cleaning materials, medicines out of reach of children.

D. **Program**

____ Proper child-staff ratios.
____ Creative play.
____ Plenty of play materials.
____ Organized program of activities.
____ Supervised rest time.
____ Minimal, supervised TV if any.
____ Stories read.

E. General

____ A license or registration certificate from Pennsylvania Department(s) of Public Welfare and/or Education.
____ Rules clearly explained.
____ Good behavior encouraged.
____ Other parents visiting.
____ Children allowed to get dirty naturally through play.
____ No children "left out".
____ Lots of laughing, caring, sharing.
____ HAPPY CHILDREN.

ASK THESE QUESTIONS:

- May I drop in anytime?
- May I participate in program planning?
- May I take part in special events and trips?
- What are the hours?
- What are the fees?
- What do the fees include? Are there extra costs?
- Is there a reduction in fee if my child is out sick?
- What happens if my child gets sick or injured at the center?
- Are the caregivers trained in child development?
- What are the hiring procedures?
- How long has most of the staff worked here?
- May I obtain staff references?
- Is there a parents' group or program?
- Are there restrictions on who may pick up my child?

ASK YOURSELF:

Is the center:

____ conveniently located?
____ affordable?

Do I feel:

___ comfortable with the caregivers?
____ good while watching my child play at this center?
____ that the center is "right" for my child and myself?

TRY TO:

____ Set up a "trial day" when your child can join in activities while you observe.

AFTER YOUR CHILD BEGINS ATTENDING:

____ Drop in unannounced and visit regularly.
____ Leave emergency contact information with the caregiver.
____ Set up two or three "back-up plans" in case of your child's or your illness.
____ Get involved with your child's day care experience!

Copies of Day Care Regulations may be obtained by calling the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Day Care Unit toll-free 1-800-222-2117.

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